

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Corrigan et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,522,977) ("Corrigan"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Submitted concurrently herewith is the Declaration of Daniel A. Benton Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131 (hereinafter the "Benton Declaration") and the Declaration of Joseph F. Campbell Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131 (hereinafter the "Campbell Declaration"). Daniel A. Benton and Joseph F. Campbell are the inventors of the presently claimed invention. The Benton Declaration and the Campbell Declaration establish a prior invention with respect to the effective date of the Corrigan reference (i.e., December 17, 1999). That is, the Benton Declaration and the Campbell Declaration establish conception of the claimed invention prior to the effective date of the Corrigan reference (i.e., December 17, 1999) coupled with diligence from prior to the reference date to the filing date of the present application (i.e., March 28, 2000). See 37 C.F.R. § 1.131 and M.P.E.P. § 715.07. Thus, having established prior invention, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-13 are allowable over Corrigan.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the 35 U.S.C. § 103 rejection of claims 1-13 be withdrawn and the claims allowed.

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In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "St-CBj", is written over the printed name of Steven C. Benjamin.

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